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PERMANENT COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

18-20 TRINITY STREET
HARTFORD, CT 06106-1628

(860) 240-8300

FAX: (860) 240-8314

Email: pcsw@cga.ct.gov

www.cga.ct.gov/PCSW

**Testimony of
Natasha M. Pierre
Associate Legislative Analyst
Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
Before the
Select Committee on Housing
Tuesday, February 28, 2006**

In Support of:

**S.B. 297, AAC the Use of General Fund Budget Surplus for the Housing Trust Fund
SB 357, AA Increasing Funding for Rental Assistance and Supportive Services for
Elderly and Disabled Persons**

H.B. 5107, AAC The Beyond Shelter Program

H.B. 5108, AAC the Rental Assistance Program

**H.B. 5366, AA Providing Funds to the Connecticut Housing Authority for the
Implementation of the Mortgage Assistance Program for Low or Moderate Income
Families**

Good morning Senator Duff, Representative Green and members of the committee. My name is Natasha Pierre and I am the Associate Legislative Analyst for the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women. Thank you for this opportunity to testify on several bills that would assist low-income families to obtain affordable housing.

The PCSW has focused its attention on the need for safe and affordable housing for women and their children because it is a problem that underlies many others: For example, without access to affordable housing, single mothers are unable to obtain economic self-sufficiency -even when they are working-and women who are victims of domestic violence are unable to leave their unsafe homes because there is no place to which they can go. When housing costs are disproportionately high, residents often have to sacrifice other needs to pay their rent.

According to a report issued by the Office of Workforce Competitiveness last month entitled *The Real Cost of Living in 2005: The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Connecticut*, if Connecticut families were self-sufficient, meaning they make enough to maintain their households without government assistance, they would spend 17% to 27% of their income on housing. But we know that many families are not self-sufficient, so in fact, many are spending 30% of their household incomes on rent.¹

Thirty-three percent of Connecticut's population rent rather than own, and in the cities the number drastically increases.² For example, 75% of Hartford residents, 70% of New Haven residents, 57% of New Britain and Bridgeport residents, and 52% of Waterbury resident are not homeowners.³

Those that can rent or buy property are the lucky ones. High rental costs and the inability to obtain home ownership are contributing factors to the increase of homelessness, which is fast becoming a women's issue as families – not just individual adults – are now seeking shelter. In FFY 2004, 1,321 families sought shelter.⁴ Of those families, single females headed 88%, single males headed 3%, and 9% were two-parent families.⁵ Ten thousand and twenty (10,020) single adults sought shelter.⁶ Of that population, 21% were women.⁷

In light of our current housing situation, investments in affordable housing and home ownership must remain a top priority. We thank you for your attention and urge your support of these proposed bills which would ensure financial commitment to affordable housing and home ownership.

¹ Partnership for Strong Families. In 2004, 45.9% of renting household paid over 30% of income on rent.

² Priscilla Canny, Ph.D. and Douglas Hall, Ph.D. *Housing: Home Ownership in Connecticut*, CT Voices for Children Census Connections, Vol. 1, Issue 2, September 2003.

³ Ibid.

⁴ *Homeless Shelter Report Annual Demographic for Federal Fiscal Year 2004*. CT Department of Social Services via CT Coalition to End Homelessness, available at www.cceh.org/facts.htm.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.